



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Study Guide Advanced Clerical Series Written Examination

- The Advanced Clerical Series exam is required for the following classifications: Administrative Specialist I, Administrative Specialist II, Executive Assistant, Intake Specialist, and Senior Administrative Specialist.
- This booklet contains **SAMPLE QUESTIONS ONLY**. Studying this booklet will not necessarily improve your exam score.

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PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THIS EXAM PREPARATION GUIDE

This guide was developed to help you prepare to take the Advanced Clerical written exam. That exam is used to fill Administrative Specialist I & II, Executive Assistant, Intake Specialist, and Senior Administrative Specialist positions. The guide contains general exam-taking advice and also provides specific information related to the exam content. This information includes the subject areas covered by the exam, the kinds of questions to expect, strategies for approaching the questions, and sample questions. Though this information cannot guarantee a higher exam score, it can give you direction for your exam preparation that will assist you in doing your best.

PREPARING TO TAKE THE EXAM

Before the Day of the Exam

- Review this guide to get familiar with the content of the exam. Knowing about the topics and kinds of questions that will be in the exam will ensure that you will not be surprised by the content of the exam or the manner in which it is presented. This can improve your ability to demonstrate your job potential.
- Make sure that you know where the exam will be administered and all of the relevant details, such as where to park, where to report for the exam, and what identification is required.

On the Day of the Exam

- Make sure that you are well rested and have eaten. These things will help your concentration during the exam.
- Plan your day to allow plenty of time to get yourself prepared and get to the exam site. Allow enough time to cope with weather, traffic, parking, etc. Hurrying creates anxiety, so do not put yourself in the position of having to hurry.
- Listen carefully to all instructions from the exam administrator. Make sure that you understand the instructions and carry them out correctly. Ask questions at the proper time before the exam begins if you are unsure of any aspect of what you should do during the exam.

GENERAL EXAM TAKING TIPS

- Use your time carefully. The time limit should provide you with more than enough time if you move through the exam steadily and do not spend too much time on any one question.
- Read the questions and answer choices carefully. Read all of the answer choices before you select an answer.
- If you come to a question that is especially difficult, skip that question and come back to it later if you have time.
- Answer every question. Scores are based on the number of correct answers. You will receive no credit if you leave an answer space blank. It is to your advantage to use your best judgment to make a choice among the answer choices provided.

THE ADVANCED CLERICAL WRITTEN EXAM

The Advanced Clerical written exam is based upon a job study that identified the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the job successfully. These areas include:

- your skill in processing information and data.
- your oral and written communication skills.
- your skill in performing clerical problem-solving activities.

All of the exam questions are presented in a multiple-choice format. Each question is identified by a question number that is followed by a question statement. After the question statement, there are between two and four answer choices. You should read all of the answer choices and then choose the best answer. **Each question has only one correct answer.**

EXAM SECTION 1: PROCESSING INFORMATION AND DATA

This exam section contains thirty (30) questions designed to assess your skill in processing information and data. This includes the performance of coding, data comparison, alpha and numeric filing, and basic arithmetic tasks. All of these tasks require significant attention to detail. A good strategy for approaching these types of questions is to first make sure that you understand exactly what information or action the question requires. For example, does the question ask you to identify a certain type of error, find specific information contained in a chart or table, or arrange information in a certain sequence? Once you clearly understand the required task, then carefully consider each of the response choices, keeping in mind that they may be very similar. A difference of a single letter or digit can make the difference between the correct and incorrect choices. Given this, it is advisable to read through the question and answer choices more than once before selecting your answer.

Examples of these types of questions are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

To answer the following question, you will need to use the information contained in the table below. Read the question that appears after the table and then use the table to choose the correct code.

Vehicle Operation Costs

Expense	Code 1	Program	Code 2	Vehicle Type	Code 3
Fuel	054	Administration	100	Van	25
Repair	062	Grounds	200	Truck	27
Maintenance	065	Operations	300	Economy	32
Fluids	058	Customer Care	400	Sedan	34

1. What is the correct code to identify the cost to repair a van assigned to Customer Care?
 - A. 054-100-27
 - B. 058-300-25
 - C. 062-400-25
 - D. 065-200-27

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #1 is response choice "C". When answering questions based upon information contained in a table, the first step is to familiarize yourself with the table. Determine the purpose of the table, how the information is organized, and what specific information is contained in the rows and columns. In this case, the purpose of the table is to show how to record costs associated with operating vehicles. Therefore, the codes depicted in the columns each represent a type of identifying information, such as types of costs, the departments where vehicles are assigned, and vehicle types. Then, look closely at the question to make sure that you clearly understand what information is requested and whether there are any differences between the presentation of information in the table and how the question is phrased. In this case, information for all three code areas in the table is requested, but the question does not present the information in the same sequence. Therefore, you must reorder the information to reflect the correct code order. Specifically, in the table, in the column labeled Expense is the entry Repair followed by the number 062 in the column labeled Code 1. In the column labeled Program is the entry Customer Care followed by the number 400 in the column labeled Code 2. In the column labeled Vehicle Type is the entry Van followed by the number 25 in the column labeled Code 3. Therefore, the correct code is 062-400-25 which is response choice "C".

For the question below, you are to determine whether the two sets of information shown are exactly alike. If they are not exactly alike, then you must indicate how many of the three lines have differences. Use the key below to indicate the result of your comparison of the two sets of information.

KEY

- A = The two sets of information are exactly alike.
- B = There is a difference in one line.
- C = There are differences in two lines.
- D = There are differences in all three lines.

2. \$7,581	\$7.581
\$6,358	\$6,385
\$9,213	\$9,213

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #2 is response choice "C". Only one of the three sets of information is exactly alike, therefore, two lines contain differences. In the first line, there is a comma after the "7" in the value on the left while the value on the right has a decimal point in the same place. In the second line, the last two digits are transposed with the value on the left ending in "58" and the value on the right ending in "85".

3. Arrange the following items in alphabetical order for filing.

1. Leighton
2. Leeds
3. Lehmann
4. Leiden

- A. 2, 3, 1, 4
- B. 2, 3, 4, 1
- C. 2, 4, 3, 1
- D. 4, 3, 2, 1

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #3 is response choice "B". To identify the correct answer, you must first determine the correct alphabetical order for the names. This is determined by comparing each letter while moving from left to right. In this case, the letters that affect the order appear in the third and fourth letters of the names. Then, you must use the number that precedes each name (1, 2, 3, or 4) to identify the choice that contains the correct order.

4. Arrange the following items in ascending numerical order for filing.

1. 72356
2. 73184
3. 73265
4. 72523

- A. 1, 4, 2, 3
- B. 2, 3, 1, 4
- C. 3, 1, 2, 4
- D. 4, 1, 3, 2

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #4 is response choice "A". To identify the correct answer, you must first determine the correct numerical order for the four numbers. This is determined by comparing each number while moving from left to right. Then, you must use the number that precedes each of the numbers (1, 2, 3, or 4) to identify the choice that contains the correct order.

5. If an employee has signed up to participate in a savings plan that will deduct two (2) percent each month from a monthly salary of \$3,500, how much money will be deducted over a one year period?
- A. \$ 70.00
 - B. \$ 84.00
 - C. \$700.00
 - D. \$840.00

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #5 is response choice "D". To determine the correct answer, you must consider both the deduction and the number of months. One approach is to first calculate the 2 percent deduction for one month based on the monthly salary provided and then multiplying the monthly deduction by 12 to determine the amount for an entire year. The calculations for this approach are $\$3,500 \times 0.02 = \70 for the first step and $\$70 \times 12 = \840 for the second step. Another approach is to determine the annual salary ($\$3,500 \times 12 = \$42,000$) and then calculate the 2 percent deduction ($\$42,000 \times 0.02 = \840).

EXAM SECTION 2: COMMUNICATION SKILLS

This exam section contains thirty (30) questions that evaluate your knowledge of how to communicate effectively with others orally and in writing.

The questions that assess your written communication skills will require you to review sentences and either indicate whether they are correct or incorrect with regard to grammar and punctuation or select the correct word or phrase to complete a sentence. The most effective approach for doing your best on this type of question is to review basic grammar and punctuation rules prior to taking the exam. Then, when taking the exam, sound each sentence out mentally to be certain that you are actually reading every word as it is presented. Sometimes our eyes may see something that is incorrect, but our brains interpret it as what we expect to see, rather than what is actually there.

The questions that assess your oral communication skills will describe a situation and ask you to select the most effective response given the circumstances. These questions focus on techniques that promote effective interaction with others, such as how to communicate clearly, persuade or motivate others, and resolve conflict. For this type of question, it is important to remember to view the question from the perspective of how a government agency would want employees performing advanced clerical tasks to respond to its customers and clients in the environment in which the work takes place.

Examples of the types of questions in this exam section are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

6. A customer who is upset about a particular situation has come to your office and, while explaining the situation to you, has become more frustrated and upset. If you have the authority to handle the problem, you will be most likely to calm the situation if you:
- A. become increasingly formal and business-like.
 - B. explain that being angry will not improve the situation.
 - C. attempt to lighten the situation with humor or casual discussion.
 - D. ask the customer to describe what course of action would solve the problem in an acceptable manner.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #6 is response choice "D". The first step in answering a question of this type is to create a mental picture of the situation, considering who is involved, what is prompting their behavior, and what a good outcome would be. In this case, the customer's frustration is caused by a specific problem. Accordingly, if you can address the problem, the person's anger is likely to diminish. In such a situation, it is often helpful to ask the person who is upset to explain what they think would solve the problem. This conveys that you are open to listening and redirects the upset person away from their anger and towards finding a solution. Such an explanation also provides information that will guide in solving the problem. None of the other response choices directly addresses what is causing the customer's frustration. In fact, such actions could be seen as aloof, insensitive, or not taking the issue seriously, which may increase rather than decrease the customer's frustration.

Read the sentences that appear as questions #7, #8, and #9 and then use the answer key below to indicate whether the sentences are grammatically correct or incorrect. The kinds of errors you will find include incomplete sentences, incorrect word usage, inappropriate word forms, and subject-verb disagreements.

KEY

A = The sentence is grammatically **correct**.

B = The sentence is grammatically **incorrect**.

7. The plane paper was used for the most recent printing.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #7 is response choice "B". This sentence contains the inappropriate form of a word. The word "plane", which means an aircraft, should be replaced with the word "plain", which means ordinary.

8. All of the four reports has been reviewed.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #8 is response choice "B". This sentence contains a subject-verb disagreement. The word "has" should be replaced with the word "have".

9. Directing visitors to the correct location.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #9 is response choice "B". This is a sentence fragment which means that it is incomplete. In order to be complete, it would need to include who is directing the visitors. For example, the sentence could be rewritten as follows: "We will be directing visitors to the correct location."

10. The day _____ without incident.

- A. past
- B. paste
- C. passed

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #10 is response choice "C". The correct word to complete the sentence is "passed", which is a form of the word "pass" and means to move or go by. The word "past" refers to a previous time and the word "paste" refers to adhesive or the act of sticking something onto a surface.

EXAM SECTION 3: CLERICAL PROBLEM SOLVING

This exam section contains thirty (30) questions that assess knowledge and skills required to prioritize, organize, and complete clerical work effectively. The questions describe situations or provide information which you must interpret. Then, based on the circumstances, you must decide which answer choice will best accomplish what the question requires. Exam questions of this type may ask you to determine things such as what action to take based on written instructions or procedures, the best sequence for performing a number of tasks given certain parameters, or how much time or other resources will be needed to accomplish something.

Your success in completing these types of tasks is dependent upon your ability to accurately read and interpret detailed written information and, in some cases, your skill in determining the appropriate calculations to make and then accurately completing them. Questions that involve computations will include basic operations common in a business setting, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. The best strategy for approaching questions in this exam section is to be sure to carefully read all of the materials, make sure that you understand exactly what outcome each question is focused on, and double check any computations.

Examples of the types of questions in this exam section are shown below. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the correct answer.

11. You are assisting with annual budget preparation for your office and must estimate how many toner cartridges the office printer will use over the next year. If the toner cartridges can print 20,000 pages and the average number of pages printed each month is 5,000, how many cartridges must be purchased in order to meet printing demands for the one-year period?
- A. 3.
 - B. 4.
 - C. 5.
 - D. 6.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #11 is response choice "A". To answer the question correctly, you must determine how many pages are printed over a one year period and then divide that number by the number of pages that a single toner cartridge can print. Thus, the first computation is $5,000 \text{ pages} \times 12 \text{ months} = 60,000 \text{ pages}$ printed per year. Then, the second computation is $60,000 \text{ pages} \div 20,000 \text{ pages} = 3 \text{ toner cartridges}$.

Use the information below to answer the 3 questions that follow.

You are responsible for processing applications for the use of City facilities for special events. One such facility, the Chambers Mansion Historical Park, has specific requirements that are described below.

Chambers Mansion Historical Park - Event Permits

The City allows resident individuals or groups with an address within the City boundaries to utilize the building and grounds of the Chambers Mansion Historical Park for meetings and events. Event permits may be requested by submitting an application to the City Parks Department no more than 12 months prior to the event and within the time requirements outlined below. All applicable fees noted below must be submitted at the time of application.

	Event Level 1	Event Level 2	Event Level 3
Event Size	100 people or less	101 - 500 people	500+ people
Application Deadline*	15 days prior to event	30 days prior to event	60 days prior to event
Application Fee	\$50	\$75	\$100
Alcohol License Fee	\$100	\$200	\$300
Tour Guide Fee	\$50 per hour		

* The application deadline will be extended by 10 days if the proposed event will involve any on-site concessions or vendors.

12. Based on the information provided, what is the first thing that must be confirmed in order to process an event application that has been submitted?
- A. The availability of the facility.
 - B. The residence status of the requester.
 - C. That the amount of fees included is correct.
 - D. That application has been filed by the appropriate deadline.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #12 is response choice "B". The paragraph above the table indicates that event permits are only available for "resident individuals or groups with an address within City boundaries." If this criterion is not met, none of the other factors is relevant because the permit cannot be granted. Therefore, this is the first thing that must be confirmed.

13. Today is the 10th day of the month and there are 31 days in this month. You have just received an application for a Level 2 event that will include vendors. Does the application meet the filing deadline requirements if the event is to be held on the 15th day of the next month?
- A. No, the application has not met the filing deadline requirements.
 - B. Yes, the application has been filed within the deadline requirements.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #13 is response choice "A". This application must be filed 40 days prior to the proposed event. The Level 2 application deadline is 30 days and the inclusion of vendors requires an additional 10 days. The number of days from the current day (10th day of the month) to the event (15th day of the next month) is only 36 days.

14. The total fee to be submitted at the time of application for a Level 1 event that will include alcoholic beverages and the services of a tour guide for 3 hours is:
- A. \$100.
 - B. \$150.
 - C. \$200.
 - D. \$300.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #14 is response choice "D". The application fee and alcohol license fees for a Level 1 event are \$50 and \$100. The tour guide fee is \$50 per hour, making 3 hours of time add an additional \$150 to the fees. The resulting amount is $\$50 + \$100 + \$150 = \300 .

15. It is currently 8:30 a.m. and you have just been asked to prepare 25 information binders for a meeting that is to be held at 11:15 a.m.. For each binder you estimate that it will take four minutes to print the contents, an additional one minute to punch holes in the materials, and one minute to correctly organize the materials by sections in the binder. If you have the ability to dedicate all of your time to this task starting immediately and have no interruptions, can all the binders be completed in time for the meeting?
- A. No, all of the binders cannot be completed in time for the meeting.
 - B. Yes, the binders can be completed in time for the meeting.

Answer: The correct answer to sample question #15 is response choice "B". The time available before the meeting is 165 minutes. Each binder requires a total of 6 minutes to prepare and there are 25 binders. The total time to prepare the binders is $6 \text{ minutes} \times 25 \text{ binders} = 150 \text{ minutes}$.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

If you feel that you would benefit from more practice, your local library or relevant Internet web sites may have reference materials that can be helpful. This is true for all of the subject areas covered by the Advanced Clerical written exam.